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A PLAIN and EASY
METHOD,

Whereby a Man of a
Moderate Capacity

May arrive at
FULL SATISFACTION

In all things that concern his
Everlasting Salvation.

To which is added, A
PARAPHRASE
ON
St. *Athanasius's* Creed.

By the most Reverend Dr. EDWARD SYNGE,
Lord Archbishop of *Tuam* in Ireland.

Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right? Gen. xviii. 25.
Are not my ways equal? Ezek. xviii. 29.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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THE P R E F A C E.



H E who has often to deal with the Consciences of Men, may soon find that amongst other Difficulties under which they sometimes labour, these three are, to many, none of the least perplexing.

First, That they find more Doctrines frequently urged and pressed upon them, as Matters of Religion, than what they are able, or, in the midst of all their Affairs, have Opportunity, to enquire into.

Secondly, That of several of those Doctrines, into which they have endeavoured to enquire, they are able to frame but very obscure and imperfect Notions, altho' at the same time they are told, that the explicit Belief of them is necessary to every Man's eternal Salvation.

And, Thirdly, That notwithstanding all the Illustrations and Arguments that are brought for the clearing up and confirming of these Doctrines, yet still the utmost Assent, which they do or can give to them, is not altogether free from some Doubts and Hesitations, which sometimes, notwithstanding all their Endeavours to the contrary, they find unavoidably to arise in their Minds.

P R E F A C E.

For the Satisfaction chiefly of such Persons as these (whose Thoughts I have commonly found to be most afflicting to them) I published many Years since two little Books (of which I have made mention § XXXIX.) and lately a third, to which I gave this Title, Religion tryed by the Test of sober and impartial Reason; but finding upon a serious Review of the whole, that something yet farther and more expressly might, and therefore ought to be said for the Cure of those more especially, in whose Minds the Malady has taken very deep Root, I have once more endeavoured (and I hope not impertinently) to offer something which may be of solid Comfort and Use to them.

*That I may the more easily convey my Thoughts into the Mind of my Reader, I have taken upon me the Person (which I suppose him to be) of an Enquirer into Religion; and have endeavoured to advance, with all possible Clearness, from one Step to another, until I arrive at that Satisfaction, which at my first setting out I suppose myself to have wanted. And if any one, of our own established Church particularly, shall be offended with me, as guilty, in his Opinion, of too much Moderation; I desire him seriously to consider these Words in the second Part of our Homily, Of the Knowledge of Holy Scripture. "Those
" things in the Scripture that be plain to understand, and necessary for Salvation, every
" Man's Duty is to learn them, to print them
" in Memory, and effectually to exercise them.
" And as for the dark Mysteries, to be con-*
" tented

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“ tented to be ignorant in them, until such
“ time as it shall please God to open those
“ things unto him. In the mean season (N. B.)
“ if he lack either Aptness or Opportunity,
“ God will not impute it to his Folly.

When the Reader comes to § XXII. of this Discourse, I desire him to suspend his Judgment of it, until he has read and seriously considered § XXVII, XL, XLI, XLII. And lest he should even then mistake my Meaning, I think it may not be amiss here again distinctly and briefly to lay it down in the following Propositions.

1. *It is the indispensable Duty of every Man to keep his Mind always in a fitting Disposition for the Reception of, and assenting unto all such Truths, as God shall be pleased to propose unto him.*

2. *If the Mind be thus fittingly disposed, and such Truth sufficiently proposed unto it, with its proper Evidence, the Act of Assent thereunto of necessity follows, and cannot be withheld.*

3. *But to give Assent to any thing, as being true, without sufficient Evidence for the same, is altogether unreasonable, and (if the Mind be rightly disposed and under no Delusion) impossible.*

4. *Properly speaking then, the Duty of Faith consists in nothing else but a Readiness and Willingness to seek for, receive, and embrace, whatever Truth God shall be pleased any way to propose to us; the Authority or Testimony of God being Evidence beyond Exception for the Truth of any Doctrine; and such Readiness and Willingness (in opposition to all Partiality and Prejudice) be-*

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ing that very Disposition of Mind which we are always bound to preserve.

5. *But the formal Act of Assent (alone considered) neither is nor can be a Duty. For if the Authority or Testimony of God, or any other Evidence for a Proposition or Doctrine, appears to be sufficient, the Assent is necessary, and follows of course: But if the Evidence does not appear to be sufficient, then the Assent is unreasonable and impossible.*

When the Reader has well consider'd what I have said upon this Argument in the Discourse itself, I cannot but think that he will be of my Opinion.

Whether the Interpretation which I have given [§ XLVII.] of those Words in our Office of Baptism [All this I stedfastly believe] may at first Sight please every one, is more than I will venture to say; but if any one excepts against it, I desire he would give me his Opinion upon the following Case.

A Man bred up in Infidelity, but now in a good measure convinc'd of the Truth of Christianity, applies himself to one of our Bishops (suppose) for Baptism; the Bishop examines him in the fundamental Principles of our Religion, and, finding that he has a true Notion of the Meaning of them, he farther demands whether he heartily and stedfastly believes these things of which he has thus given an Account? The Man answers, that he cannot indeed say that his Mind is altogether free from Doubt and Hesitation, which sometimes he finds to arise within him, and may probably proceed

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ceed either from the Weakness of his Understanding, or (it may be) from some Suggestion of an evil Spirit; but this with all Sincerity he affirms, that he is so far convinc'd of the Truth of Christianity, and the Doctrines of Faith deliver'd by it, that he firmly purposes and resolves (thro' the Grace of God) not only to make Profession of them as long as he lives, but also constantly to lead his Life in the most exact Conformity thereunto that possibly he can, and in the Performance of all those Duties which are either expressly prescribed by that Religion, or rationally to be deduc'd from the Principles of it.

I demand whether the Bishop might lawfully deny Baptism unto such a Man for want of a stedfast Belief? And if not, then it is plain that no more is or ought to be meant by a stedfast Belief, than according to the Account which I have given thereof in the above-nam'd Section.

But the greatest Objection that I conceive will be made against this Discourse, is, that, by supposing that God may possibly extend some Mercy even to those who are altogether ignorant of Christianity, I may seem to have given too much Encouragement to Infidelity: to obviate which therefore I desire it may be observed, that all that I have said touching this Point is plainly reducible to these three Propositions.

First, That as far as any Man's Ignorance or Error is occasioned by any Neglect or Fault of his own, so far there is all the Reason that may be to believe that God will punish him for the same.

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Secondly

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Secondly, *That if a Man, even without any Fault or Neglect of his own, is ignorant of, or mistaken in those things, which, according to the Tenour of the Gospel, are necessary to our Eternal Salvation; he can have no Title to that Reward which God, thro' Jesus Christ, has only promis'd to true Believers.*

Thirdly, *However absolute the Authority of God our Creator is over all the Work of his own Hands, yet it cannot be suppos'd that he, who is infinitely good and merciful, will inflict Everlasting Misery upon any Man, for that which is no way to be ascrib'd or justly imputed to any Neglect or Fault of his own.*

Now altho' what I have thus said may tend to vindicate Christianity from that Cruelty, with which some falsely charge it, as if it doom'd all Men indifferently to the Flames of Hell who do not embrace and profess it (and that in its Truth and Purity) without any Allowance made even for their involuntary and invincible Ignorance or Errors; yet how this should give Encouragement to any to continue in Infidelity, Error, or Ignorance of any Truth that may be profitable to his Eternal Salvation, in case he has any way of being better inform'd, is more than I am able to imagine.

A PLAIN



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PLAIN and EASY

METHOD, &c.

I.  Amongst all the Disputes and Controversies which for so many Ages have exercised the Wit and Industry of Mankind, there is, in my Judgment, but one single Enquiry that can fully recompence the utmost Labour and Diligence we can bestow upon it: And that is, *What is necessary to be done in order to the avoiding of everlasting Misery, and the Attainment of eternal Happiness?*

II. I grant indeed that it is but a foolish piece of Cynical Moroseness for a Man to *despise*, or *reject* either Riches, or Honour, or Learning, or any thing that may be an Instrument of doing Good, or even of innocent Comfort or Delight either to himself or others; provided that for the obtaining of it he neither violates his Conscience, nor sacrifices his Quiet and Contentment of Mind. However, if my Endeavours after any of these things prove altogether unsuccessful, I find it is at least *possible* for a Man to bear the want of them: But having an unalterable Persuasion in my Mind that my Soul is immortal, and that after this short and troublesome Life shall have an end, I must of necessity enter upon a State, either of Joy or Misery, that is to last to all Eternity; as often as I seriously think of this (and every Man I believe sometimes must think of it whether he will or no) I find it absolutely impossible to have the
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least true Comfort or Satisfaction within myself (whatever my worldly Condition may be) as long as I remain uncertain concerning the Way and Method to be taken for the avoiding what I cannot but dread, and the obtaining of what I necessarily and above all other things desire.

III. All that is or can possibly be necessary on my part for the escaping of this future Misery, and attainment of Happiness, is to *keep the Commandments of God*, *Mat. xix. 17. Luke x. 28.* and thereby secure his Favours to me. So says our Blessed Saviour in express Terms: And if we suppose our everlasting Portion in the Life to come, to be assigned to every Man by no other Authority but that of God himself (in which all Religions whatsoever do fully agree) it cannot be imagined that any thing which he has *no way commanded* (that is to say neither expressly, nor by Consequence) should be any way necessary in order to the obtaining a Share of that Reward, of which he alone has the sole and entire Distribution.

IV. If any one shall tell me, that it is not enough for me to *keep God's Commandments*; but that, in order to my Salvation, it is necessary also that I believe those *doctrinal Truths* which he has made known unto us; or those, at the least, which we commonly call *Articles of Faith*; I answer, that whatever God has commanded me to believe, I am certainly bound to believe accordingly; and if I do not so believe, I am justly to be punished with eternal Damnation. But if a Doctrine be in itself never so true, yet if God has no way laid any Command upon me to *believe* it, in this case, not to believe is no Sin, *for where no Law* (or in other Terms no Command) *is, there is no Transgression*; that is to say, no Sin, *Rom. xiv. 15.* nor, consequently, can this

this my want of Belief be any Bar or Obstruction to my Salvation.

V. *Obedience*, truly such, to a Command of God, always, in the very nature of the thing, presupposes a sufficient Knowledge both of the thing to be done, and also of its being required by God. For if I am ignorant of the former of these, it must be by *Chance* and not *Choice*, if my Action be conformable to the Rule that is given me; and if of the latter, whatever I may chance to do, it must proceed from some other Principle, and not that of *Obedience*.

VI. That therefore I may arrive at that full Satisfaction and Conviction of Mind, which in this whole Affair I seek for, it must be my Business carefully to enquire, *First*, By what Rule I may at all times know, whether God has commanded such or such a thing, or not. And, *Secondly* (by a due Attendance to this Rule) what are all the several and particular things, which make up the Matter and Import of his Commands.

VII. But here let me note, once for all, that under this Expression, *viz. God's Commands*, or *Commandments*, we are always to comprehend his *Prohibitions* also: His *negative Precepts*, such as *Thou shalt not commit Adultery*, *Thou shalt not Steal*, being always called his *Commandments*, as well as his *positive* ones, such as *Remember to keep Holy the Sabbath Day*, and *Honour thy Father and thy Mother*.

VIII. By a *Command*, properly speaking, we always mean, *The Will of a lawful Superior signified to his Inferior as a Rule whereby he is required to act*. He who has no lawful Authority over me, let him signify his Will to me in what manner soever, yet such Signification (however it may be an Usurpation or Presumption, or by what other Name we may call it) is not, in Propriety of Speech, to be looked upon as a *Command*, or as such to be obeyed.

IX. That

IX. That God is mine and every Creatures *lawful Superior*, is beyond all doubt. Now the *Will* of God is either a Rule to his own Actions; and then we call it his *Decree*; or to the *necessary Actions* of his Creatures; and then we call it *the Law of the Creation*; or to the *voluntary Actions* of such of his Creatures as are intelligent, and have the Freedom of Choice; and this same Will of God, when it is signified to any such Creature, as a Rule whereby he is required to act, is what we call the *Command of God*, or the *Law of God*, as the Word *Law* is commonly understood in the *moral* Sense and Meaning of it.

X. From the very Nature and Definition of a *Command*, thus laid down, it most evidently follows, that however God may have been pleased to signify his Will as a Rule of Action unto others, yet this can be *no Command to me*, except I *know* it, or at least have *sufficient Opportunity* of coming to the Knowledge of it. When the Matter of a *Law* is framed, and put into proper Words, yet it does not receive its Sanction; that is to say, it is in effect no *Law*, until it is *promulged*: Nor does the *Will of God* become a *Command* until it is *signified*, that is to say, *made known* to those who are to obey it, [§ VIII.]

XI. If we will speak properly, wherever a *Command* is, there must be, *First, A Person commanding*; and, *Secondly, a Person commanded*. And if all the rest of Mankind were commanded by God to do any thing, yet if I am not commanded among the rest, the Command is *to me* no Command: Nor can I be said to be *commanded*, except the Command be *directed* to me; and how can any Command be said to be *directed* to him to whom it is not signified; that is to say, who neither knows any thing of it, nor has the Means or Opportunity of such Knowledge?

XII. If it be objected that even *the Servant who knew not his Lord's Will*, was yet to be beaten, tho' but
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with *few Stripes*, for not performing it, *Luke xii. 48.* I answer, that in the Interpretation of all our Blessed Saviour's *moral Discourses* (and more especially those that are wrapt up in parabolical Expressions) we must never depart from the Rules of evident Reason and plain natural Equity. If then in this Parable (for such it is) we suppose that this Servant's Ignorance was occasioned by some want of Diligence in himself; his Fault, in not performing his Master's Will, must also be supposed to deserve some Correction, tho' not so great as that of his Fellow-servant, who is said to have *known his Lord's Will*, and yet *not to have prepared himself nor done accordingly*. But if we suppose that the ignorant Servant had *no way* of coming to the knowledge of his Lord's Will, and consequently that this his Ignorance was not in the least any Fault of his; for his Lord to have punished him but with *one single Stripe* for not doing that which he could not possibly know, and which therefore was impossible for him to perform, would have been an unreasonable *Cruelty*, if not *Injustice*, and therefore cannot be supposed to have the least Approbation from our Blessed Saviour. Neither will it be absurd, where the Reason of the thing requires it, to interpret a *diminutive* Expression in an *absolutely negative* Sense: *He shall be called the least* (that is, he shall not be reckoned at all as) *in the Kingdom of Heaven*, *Mat. v. 19.* And why not in like manner here (since the Rules of Reason do as necessarily require it, if we suppose the Servant's Ignorance to have been *absolutely invincible*) he *shall be beaten with few Stripes*; that is to say, he shall not be beaten at all?

XIII. The giving of a Command necessarily implies a requiring the Performance of the thing commanded. If (for Example) I should say an hundred times to my Child or Servant, *I command you to do such a thing,*

thing, and at the same time it sufficiently appears that I do *not really require* the Performance of what thus in Words I seem to command, my *verbal Command*, in this Case, is plainly *no real one*; that is to say, it is *no Command at all*. And if in like manner it appears that there is any thing which God neither does, nor can be supposed to *require* from any Man, such a thing as this can never be the Matter of any Command of his, however the form of Words may seem in outward Appearance to extend themselves to it. Now whosoever is truly *just*, and *wise*, *cannot*, and he that is *good* and *merciful* most certainly *will not* require any thing from any person that is *impossible*, or beyond his Ability to perform: If therefore it be ever pretended that any thing of that Sort is commanded by God, it must be a Mistake; for no Truth can be more evident than this, that *whatsoever is impossible to be done, can never be the Matter of a Divine Command*.

XIV. In the very Nature and Notion of a *Command*, as given to a voluntary Agent, it is also necessarily implied that it is in the Power of the Person, to whom the Command is given, *not to do* the thing commanded. For instance, It may, upon occasion, be proper to command a Child to eat his Food; but supposing him constantly and regularly so to do, to command him to *grow in Stature, and Bigness*, would be altogether absurd. The reason is, because this is what he must *necessarily* do, and *cannot avoid*, until such time as he is come to his full Growth. The like may be said of commanding a healthy Man to be hungry when he is long without Meat, or thirsty without Drink, or cold when he is in the Snow, or hot when he is in a warm Bath; for these are things of *natural Necessity*, and not of *voluntary Choice*, and therefore are altogether *uncapable* of being the Matter of a Command. If therefore any one, upon
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occasion, shall tell me that *God has commanded me* to do this, or that thing, which yet I cannot avoid doing if I would, but must of Necessity do whether I will or no, I must look upon this also as a Mistake; and that for the Reason which I have just now given.

XV. Fabulous Stories and feigned Miracles, cunningly contrived, and confidently imposed upon ignorant or unthinking Men; Custom and Tradition, which, from a slender Beginning, may in Tract of Time grow strong and prevalent; the Authority of Men in Power, or of Repute for their supposed Learning or Sanctity; temporal Encouragement on the one hand, or Persecution on the other; or whatever else may have an Influence upon the *Imagination* or Passions of Mankind; all or any of these things, I say, may by themselves alone be very instrumental in supporting and maintaining of *Superstition*, whose Residence is chiefly in the *Fancy*. But *true Religion*, which is a *sober and serious Persuasion of the Mind* (whatever collateral Helps may be given it) must always necessarily have its *ultimate Foundation* in clear and solid *Reason*. If I were not first *Rational*, it would be impossible that I could ever be truly *Religious*; and if I had not a well grounded *Reason of the Hope that is in me* [1 Pet. iii. 15.] my Religion would be no better than a *House built upon the Sand* [Mat. 7. 26.] or indeed a *Castle in the Air*.

XVI. To give a few short Hints of some of the Proofs which may be brought for Religion: It is a self-evident Principle, engrafted in every Man's *Reason*, that *where no Cause is, there can be no Effect*. If ever therefore we could suppose that there was so much as *one Instant* wherein *nothing* did at all exist, it is Demonstration that nothing could ever be produced into Existence: From whence the Consequence is no less than indubitable, that therefore there is some first and eternal Cause of all those Effects

fects which have been and are daily produced; that is, in other Terms, that *there is a Being who made all other things, but is Himself without Beginning*, whom we call by the Name of GOD.

XVII. And, after the same manner, every other Truth in Religion is, by a longer or shorter Train of Consequences, to be deduced from some of the plain and self-evident Principles of *Reason*. Thus (for Example) from the many illustrious Marks of *Wisdom* in the Contrivance of all the several Parts of the World, of *Power* in the Frame and Structure of it, and of *Goodness* and *Beneficence* in that Provision, which therein is made for the well being of all sorts of Creatures according to their several Capacities, it is most clearly proved, even antecedent to Revelation, that God, who made the World, is a *most wise, powerful, good, and beneficent Being*; and, consequently, as such, *to be loved, adored, worshiped, and relied upon*. From the Prophecies recorded in the *Old Testament*, and fulfilled in the Person of our Blessed Saviour, it is evidently proved that *he is the Messias*, whom God had promised to send into the World; our own *Reason* sufficiently assuring us that none but God could foretel so many Particulars, in themselves contingent, so many Years before they came to pass. From the many Miracles that were wrought by *Christ* and his Disciples, it is beyond Contradiction proved that *Christianity is from God*; *Reason* itself most clearly informing us, that He only who is the Author of Nature, could thus controul it and alter its Course; and from the bitter Sufferings and Persecutions which so many underwent, purely for the Testimony which they gave to these Miracles and Doctrine, the Truth of the Matter of Fact is abundantly established: *Reason* here again informing us that such a number of Men (and such Men especially as they were, both for their Honesty and Simplicity) neither

neither could if they would, nor would if they could, combine together in this manner to impose an unprofitable Lye (for if it were a Lye, it must be a most unprofitable one) upon the World.

XVIII. From the universal Authority which the Holy Scriptures of the *Old Testament* from the very Beginning, and those of the *New Testament* as soon as they were published and made known, everywhere obtained throughout the whole Christian Church, it beyond Controversy follows that those Writings, as they were at that time extant, did authentickly contain the Doctrine of Christianity: My Reason assuring me that it was impossible for such a vast Multitude of People, as far and near professed that Religion, to combine together in receiving Books that were not agreeable to the Doctrine received by them; and from the evident Impossibility of universally corrupting those Books in the Hands of such Multitudes of Men as had them, and constantly studied them, some in their original Languages and others in their several Translations; my *Reason* most clearly infers that wherever all, or almost all, the several Copies and Translations do agree in the same Expressions, or exactly in the same Sense, there we certainly have the true and primitive Doctrine of Christianity. And if in some few Passages some Diversity of Words or Expressions, which I am not able to rectify, or any other Cause whatsoever, has rendered the Meaning so obscure as that I have no reasonable way whereby to fix and determine it; from such Passages as these I cannot at all infer what the Will of God is, or establish any Point of Religion upon them, or any of them.

XIX. I shall prosecute this Point at present no farther; but I thought it not improper to say thus much, to put my Reader in mind that whatever any Man gives a just Assent to in Matters of Religion,

must at the last appear to be founded upon, and supported by *Reason*. No Man can give a *just Assent* to any thing that is not *self-evident* (and therefore needs no Proof.) except the Truth of it be inferred from something else, to which, as being true, he already has given a *just Assent*; and this, in like manner, must either be *self-evident*, or else inferred from some *other* Truth that is already assented to. So that either we must for ever be going back, and so can never begin to prove any thing at all; or else our Proof must *begin with*, and so be originally *founded upon* some Truth that is *evident by its own native Light*, and therefore stands in no need of being proved. But *Reason* is the only Faculty that is capable of receiving or apprehending the *native Evidence* of such a Truth; therefore either we must never offer to make any Proof of Religion at all (an Absurdity which no Man sure will maintain) or the Truth of it must ultimately, and at the last, rely upon the *Principles of Reason*: Nor is there any Doctrine or Rule of *natural Religion*, but what may be very clearly established upon such Principles: And whatever is made known unto us by *Revelation*, it is all supported by this one uncontrollable *Reason*, viz. *God*, who cannot lye, *has given his authentick Testimony to it; therefore it is true*: Or *God*, who is the supreme Lord of all, *has commanded it; therefore it is obligatory*.

XX. Since then by being a *Christian* I do not cease to be a *Man*, nor does *Revelation* destroy my *Reason*, but plainly offers itself to be soberly examined thereby, there being no other possible Way to gain my *just Assent* to it; I shall make the best use I can of *Reason* and *Revelation* together, in order to make the clearest Discovery that possibly I can, of all the several *Commands* that *God* has been pleased to lay upon me.

XXI. Whe

XXI. When I say [§ XIII.] that *whatsoever is impossible to be done, can never be the Matter of a Divine Command*; by *impossible*, I mean not only that which is *naturally*, but also whatever is *morally* so; that is to say, whatever is *beyond the reach of a Man's sincere and diligent Endeavours*. For Example, It is *naturally impossible* for a Man to fly, because all the Art and Industry in the World can never furnish him with Wings for that purpose; but it is only *morally* so for a poor Man, who is bred to the Spade or Hammer, to become a great Linguist or Mathematician; not that he wants a Capacity or *natural Ability* for it, but because he is altogether unfurnished of the Means, whereby alone he might arrive unto such Attainments. And whosoever seriously considers the *Wisdom and Justice*, as well as the *Mercy and Goodness* of God, will easily conclude that he will no more *require*, nor consequently *command*, the latter of these things than the former.

XXII. If at any time I have sufficient Evidence or Proof of the Truth of a Doctrine or Proposition, it is not in my power to *with-hold my Assent from it*; and if I *want* such Proof or Evidence as to me appears to be sufficient, it is as impossible for me to *give my Assent unto it*. From whence it follows [by § XIII, XIV.] that *to give or with hold my Assent to, or from any Doctrine, cannot* (formally taken as the Schools speak) *be the subject Matter of any Command of God*; and therefore, if *Faith* be a thing *commanded or required* by him (as most certainly it is) it must be on some other account, and not only as a *bare Belief* (which is one sort of *Assent*) given to any speculative Truth whatsoever. [See farther, § XL, XLI, XLII.]

XXIII. If, for want of some sort of reasonable Information, or of Capacity of Understanding, I never had had any the least Apprehension of God, or

his Will (which is taken to be the Case of some poor savage People in the World) it could not then have been said that God had *given me any manner of Command at all*; for to whom God's Will is *not at all signified*, to him no Command from God is *given*, [§ VIII.] And where there is no sufficient, either Information to give, or Capacity to receive any manner of Knowledge or Apprehension of any thing, to such a Man that thing, whatsoever it is, can never be said to have been *signified*; nor can any one be said to have *received a Command*, or that it is *directed* to him, except he *knows* it, or at least has some Opportunity of coming to the Knowledge of it; [§ X, XI.] From whence it follows, that if I had always been and continu'd in such a State of profound and invincible Ignorance, I could not all that while have been said to have *broken* any Command of God, having never *received* any, and consequently, whatever he might be pleas'd in such a Case to do to me by his *absolute Authority* (which by his Creatures ought always to be submitted to, and never disputed) he could not be said to *punish* me for my *Disobedience*; for he that has *received* no Command, cannot be truly said to have been *disobedient* to any.

XXIV. But having been often told and assur'd (by some who appear to have lov'd me, and by many who could have no Interest to deceive me) that there is a God most wise, good, just, and powerful, who made all things, and has given unto Mankind certain Commands or Laws, by which he requires that they should regulate their Actions, whereof he will one Day demand a strict Account from them; even thus much Notice itself, if as yet I had no more, I take to be a sufficient *Signification of God's Will*; that is to say, [§ VIII.] a *Command* from God to me that I should with all Seriousness make a farther and strict Enquiry

Enquiry into these Matters; and if there be a great Day of Account to come (and who can assure me that there is not?) what *Excuse* can I be supposed to make for myself when I shall be taxed with the Breach of all God's Commands? If I should plead for myself that I did not *know* them, and therefore cannot be said to have *disobey'd* them; it may be reply'd, that I had Warning sufficient given me to have put me upon a diligent *Enquiry* after them, which if I neglected to make, I am altogether inexcusable; the least [*probable*] Intimation that is any way given to an *Inferior* of the Will of his *Superior* being sufficient to lay him under an Obligation at least to make a farther Search, if haply he may come to a fuller and clearer Discovery of it; the Servant who has sufficient Opportunity of knowing his Lord's Will, but declines it, is almost as much to blame, I think, as he who knows it, yet does not perform it, and therefore most justly comes under the like Condemnation of being *beaten with many Stripes*, Luke xii. 47.

XXV. To make the best Enquiry (then) that I can into the Will of God, in order to the Regulation of all my Actions thereby, is so very evidently my Duty, that it is not possible for me to have a fuller Conviction of any Truth whatsoever; and if I am negligent, or do any way prevaricate in this great and important Search, my own Conscience must condemn me, and plainly tell me that I most justly deserve the utmost Punishment that the Divine Vengeance shall think fit or just to inflict upon me; but if with all Sincerity and Uprightness of Intention I use my most diligent Endeavours in this whole Affair, I am on the other hand as well assur'd that more than this God neither does nor ever will *require* from me; for whatsoever is beyond my most sincere and diligent Endeavours, is to me, if not *naturally*, yet at least *morally impossible*, and whatsoever is either of these

these ways *impossible*, can never be the Matter of any of God's Commands, or, in other Terms, cannot be *required* by him, [§ XXI.]

XXVI. It will be objected, that, according to this Doctrine, an honest *Heathen* has as good a Title to Eternal Salvation as a *Christian*. I answer, not at all. If we suppose a Man (whether *Heathen* or *Turk*, or whatever he is) to be thus truly sincere and diligent, first in making all possible Enquiry into the Will of God, and then in fulfilling it as far as ever he comes to the Knowledge of it, it will follow from what I have said, that God neither will nor can *punish* him for not doing more, *i. e.* for not doing that which was *impossible*, and therefore neither was nor could be *required* from him, [§ XIII, XXI.] But on the other side, to entitle a Man to Salvation, which is a *Reward*, there must of necessity be either some *Merit* in the Person, or some *Promise* of God sufficient to ground this Title upon. As to the former of these, it is impossible, I think, in the very nature of the thing, for Man to *merit* any thing from God, to whose free Bounty alone we entirely owe all that we are or have, whose Dominion over us is absolute, and without any Limitation, except from his own Mercy and Goodness, and to whose Happiness, or Well-being all Mankind, or even the whole Creation, cannot add so much as one single Grain. And, for the latter, what God in his infinite Mercy may do, is altogether a Secret to us; but there is no *Promise* of Salvation, that I know of, but through Faith in *Jesus Christ*, and Obedience to the Rules of the Gospel.

XXVII. Obedience to each Command of God always of Necessity is grounded upon, and presupposes an *Assent* given to all that Truth (whatever it may be) without which the Obedience itself is impracticable. For Example, It is commanded, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c. Mat. xxii. 37.*

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This Command no Man can obey except he first assents to these Truths, *viz.* That *there is a God*, and that *he is endowed with such Attributes as render him amiable*, or a fit Object of our Love. It is also commanded, that all *Nations* should be *baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, Mat. xxviii. 19. And tho' I was thus baptized when I was an Infant, and had no Sense of it, yet now I am at Age, I take this Command still so far to extend to me, as to oblige me always to own, and on my part to ratify that same Baptism which I so received. But this I cannot do, except I first assent to the Being and Authority of the *Father*, and the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*, in whose Name I received my Baptism. And if we should run through the whole Catalogue of God's Commands, we should find that they all do thus presuppose some certain *Truths*, without an *Assent* to which there can be no *true Obedience*; that is to say, none that is agreeable to the plain Design of the Command. And altho' to give my Assent to, or withhold it from any Doctrine (how true or false soever) is *formally* no matter of a Divine Command, [§ XXII.] yet since it is most evident that an Error in one single Point of Speculation may, in consequence, be the unavoidable Cause of many more; and Errors in speculative Points, if they prove contrary to any of those Truths which, as I have said, are presupposed by any of God's Commands, must necessarily mislead the Person, who thus errs, from that Exactness of true Obedience, which is required from every Man as far as it comes within his Power. I take this to be a sufficient *Signification of God's Will*, that is to say, *a Command from him to me* [§ VIII.] that I should, always take the best Care I can, ever to keep my Mind in such a Disposition, as that it may, as much as is possible, reject all Errors, and receive no other Doctrine but what is true.

XXVIII. That there are *Degrees* of Strength in a Man's Assent to any Truth, according to those of his Apprehension of the Truth itself, and the Proofs that are brought for it, I take to be undeniable. I give my Assent (for Example) to Truths of several kinds; some of them I can strictly demonstrate, and therefore can never entertain the least Doubt of them; for others I have a Concurrence of so many very probable Arguments, as amount to little less than a Demonstration; and, lastly, for others again I have such fair Evidence, as gives me reasonable Satisfaction, but yet is not sufficient to secure my Mind against all Doubt that may possibly arise from some Objections that are brought on the contrary Side: The *Strength* therefore of my Assent to these several sorts of Truths, must, in consequence, be of different degrees: And, in like manner, several Men according to the Difference of their Capacities, or of the Proof which they have received for one and the same Truth, may in very different Degrees give their Assent to it. Now the very lowest or weakest Degree of Assent (provided it really is an *Assent*) to any such Truth as I have been speaking of [§ XXVII.] is a rational Foundation for the Performance of any Duty, or Obedience to any Command of God, to which our Assent to such a Truth is as a Ground-work necessarily to be presupposed. If I own the Being of God, and his Attributes of Wisdom, Justice, Goodness, and all other his Perfections for which he ought to be loved; altho', for want of Capacity or sufficient Information, I do it but weakly and imperfectly, and not without a Mixture of Hesitation and Doubt, yet if I do it at all, and these things appear to me but a little more probable than their Contraries, the same way that the Scale turns in *Speculation*, it ought also to do in *Practice*; and upon this Foundation I may, and am bound to love God as he has commanded:

commanded : And the like Conclusion may, in the like Case, be made upon all or any other of his Commandments. But at the same time it is evident, that the *stronger* and *firmer* my Assent is to any such fundamental Truth, the more fixt and steddly my Obedience is like to be to any such Command as is built upon it. It appears therefore to me to be God's Will, and consequently I take it for another of his Commands, that, according to the best of my Capacity and Opportunities, I should always seek after the clearest and best Evidence that is to be had, for all such Truths as I can find to have an Influence on my Duty: For the better I am confirmed in my Assent to the former, the more steadfast, in all probability, I shall be in the Practice of the latter.

XXIX. My most sincere and diligent Endeavours, first, to know the Commands of God, together with the Truths which they presuppose, [§ XXVII.] and then to keep and observe them, being all that is within my Power, and therefore all that he can be supposed to *require*, and what he most certainly will *require* from me, [§ XXIV, XXV, &c.] it is altogether necessary that I should well consider, what is the true Nature of this *Sincerity* and *Diligence*, and wherein they do consist. For if I am deceived in my Notions of these things, I may either fancy myself not to be *sincere* or *diligent*, when really I am so, and then I should be a continual Torment to myself; or else I may perhaps think that I am *sincere* and *diligent*, when really I am not so, and thereby miss of that eternal Happiness which otherwise, through the Mercy and Goodness of God, I might attain unto. Now a Man's Endeavours are then only said to be *sincere*, when really and truly he *desires* to obtain and compass whatever in Appearance he pretends to strive for; and *Diligence* altogether consists in *laying the speediest and surest Hold* he can upon every Opportunity that at any time presents

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itself, or can be gained to that purpose: And whether I do thus, without any Dissimulation, *desire* both to know and keep the Commandments of God, and carefully *lay hold* on all such Opportunities as I can, in order to the compassing this my unfeigned Desire, is plainly what I cannot be ignorant of or deceived in, if I do but strictly examine, and put the Questions touching those Matters home to my own Conscience.

XXX. The Opportunities which different Men have of coming to the Knowledge of God's Commands, and of those Truths which must first in some degree be assented to, before our Obedience to them can be either rational or practicable [§ XXVII.] are very various, both as to their Kind and Degrees, according to the Capacity and other Circumstances of each particular Man; and that may be a great Opportunity to one, which is very little or none at all to another. For Example, a Book that is well and rationally writ in *the English Tongue*, may possibly afford much Instruction to me in these Matters, when at the same time it would be of no Advantage to others, who either cannot read, or are altogether ignorant of our Language; and but of very little to such as, tho' able to read *English*, yet may not have sufficient Capacity in many places fully to understand the Meaning of what is so written: And the like may be said of all other ways of attaining to this Knowledge; such as frequenting the Church, hearing of Sermons, going to School or to the University, the Study of Languages, Philosophy, History, or Antiquity, and whatever else may any way conduce to the rendering of Men more learned or knowing in the things of Religion, which some Men have more in their Power than others to make use of; and some again have less Capacity than others to receive Benefit by. Here then it is, in the very first place, incumbent on every Man, who has the least Appro-

hension of his Duty, or Sense of God's Authority, seriously to enquire and consider what Opportunities *he himself in particular* has of any way coming to the Knowledge of the Divine Commands, and of such necessary Truths, as must always be presupposed by him that gives Obedience to them. For if with all Diligence and Sincerity he makes the best use he can of these Opportunities, and afterwards in like manner reduces his Knowledge into Practice, he has then done the utmost that God requires from him, [§ XIII, XXI.] But if he be slack or negligent in the matter, or through any voluntary Omission of his own, remains in Ignorance of what he ought to do, he has no manner of Excuse to make for himself, nor can reasonably have any other Expectation, than to be condemned and severely punished for what he cannot deny to have been altogether his own Fault, [§ XXIV.]

XXXI. What and how many Opportunities Men of competent Learning may have of acquiring this Knowledge, of which I am now speaking, they are much better able to discern, each Man for himself, than I can pretend to be to tell them: But the generality of Mankind consisting of those whom we commonly call *unlearned*, who either cannot so much as read, or if they can, yet for want of the usual Means of farther improving their Understanding, have not a Capacity to apprehend any thing but what they either have been very much used to, or else is made exceedingly plain and easy; I shall place myself among the lower Rank of such sort of People, and supposing that I were now but beginning my Search after *everlasting Salvation*, I shall consider what Success I may well be supposed to have, if I honestly and diligently seek after the Way to it; or, in other terms, what *Opportunities* I in such Circumstances may have of finding out, what it is that God commands me

to do; my Obedience to such his Commands being all that is or can be required, in order thereunto, from me, [§ III, IV.]

XXXII. If I take any Man, or Society of Men, or any Book for my Rule or Guide in this most important Affair, and conclude every thing to be a Command of God, that such *Man, Society, or Book* shall propose to me under that Notion, I must first and beforehand have some sufficient Argument to convince me of the Authority which they or any of them have to declare the Commands of God unto me : For without this Conviction, I have no way to distinguish between a false *Christ*, Prophet, Church, or Revelation, and a true one; and consequently can have no more Ground for the following of the latter than the former, or indeed of any of them at all, until some sufficient *Argument* is offered for the Proof of their Truth and Authority. Now this *Argument* must either be drawn from the Authority of some other *Man, Society, or Book*, which again will require the like Proof; and then we must for ever go back, and, consequently, for want of a Beginning, can never make any Proof at all of what we intend; or else we must begin at some one or more Principles of Reason, of whose Truth we are sufficiently satisfied from their own Self-evidence, and without any other Proof than what their proper and native Light affords unto them. I find then an absolute Necessity of beginning my Search after God's Commands, and all those Truths that have any necessary relation to them, upon the Ground of such Principles as are clear and evident to my own Reason, except I should be so wild as to attempt to raise a Building without laying it upon any Foundation, [See § XV. XIX.] Only this I must never forget, through all the Enquiry that I am now about to make, viz. that altho' many times (it may be through some Defect in

in my Understanding rather than in the Argument itself) a Truth may not seem to me to be strictly *demonstrated* beyond all Doubt or Exception to the contrary; yet if, upon a most attentive and serious Consideration, it appears to have greater *Probability* only than its contradictory, it is a sufficient and reasonable Ground for me to proceed upon, in the regulation of all my Actions, as far as it can be supposed that such a *Truth* (granting it to be really such) ought to have an Influence upon them, as I have already shewn [§ XXVIII.]

XXXIII. That some Truths then are, to every one who rightly apprehends them, fully evident by their own native Light, and without any other Demonstration or Proof, I take to be unquestionable. That all the Parts of any thing, taken together, are equal to the Whole, and that no one Part, how great soever, can be equal to it; that it is impossible for two Contradictories, at the same time and in the same respect, to be true; that every thing which begins to exist, must have some Cause of its Existence, and that where no Cause is, no Effect can be produced; these, I say, and many other such things, no Man in his Wits, who once understood the Meaning of the Words in which they are express'd, did ever yet deny, or, I believe, so much as doubt of, whatever some Men, whom they call *Scepticks*, may say or pretend. But if, by my Conversation among Mankind, I had not a little learnt how to frame my Thoughts and adapt Words to them, I very much doubt whether I should have had any clear and distinct Apprehension of *Equality*, *Cause*, *Effect*, or almost any other of the Notions or Ideas of Things; at leastwise so as to be able to join them together, in order to make up even the plainest Truths. The first Opportunity therefore which I find I have of knowing any Truth at all, and consequently those

particular Truths, on which my Knowledge of God's Commands and my Obedience to them do altogether depend, is that of conversing with other Men; which may be done either by discoursing with them, or reading what they have written. If then I make the best Enquiry I am able from such Men as I can have recourse to, and I really judge best qualified to instruct me; if I carefully attend to what they say, and read or hearken to such Books as they recommend, at the same time not shutting my Ears against any thing that is offered by others, whoever they are, nor in the least endeavouring to bring myself to assent to or dissent from any thing, because this or that Man has said it, but only as, after an impartial Consideration, there appears to me to be just Reason to conclude it to be either true or false; if with Diligence and Sincerity I always proceed after this manner, as I shall then have made the best use I can of this Opportunity, so do I believe that God of his Goodness will either give such Success to my Endeavours, as that I shall come to a right Knowledge of his Commands, or else will pardon me if in any thing I am mistaken and know not how to help it. *Get wisdom, get understanding, Prov. iv. 5. Prove all things, hold fast that which is good, 1 Thess. v. 21. Try the Spirits, whether they are of God, 1 John iv. 1. Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? Luke xii. 57.* And all this according to the Ability and Opportunities which God in his Providence has given you, I take to be the loud and plain Voice of Reason as well as of Holy Scripture.

XXXIV. That there is a God most wise, good, and beneficent, as well as powerful, who is the Creator or first Cause of all other things, I have already concluded, [§ XVI, XVII.] And whatever Doubts or Perplexities my own Weakness or Melancholy, or the licentious Speeches of some atheistical Men
may

may at any time raise in my Mind about this Matter, yet as long as this Doctrine appears to me to be more probable than the contrary, it commands a proportionable degree of Assent; and is a rational and sufficient Foundation for the Performance of all such Duties, as from thence may be inferred, [§ XXVIII.] The same Difference that there is between the Root, Spring, or Principle from whence any Property, Habit, Attribute, or Action proceeds, the same there must be between the Properties, Habits, Attributes, or Actions themselves; however, for want of sufficient Variety of Words, we are often forced to call them by the same Name. For Example, whatever a *Beast* does, it proceeds only from a bare *sensitive Instinct*; but *Man* acts by *Reason*, which we allow to be a Principle of a very different Sort. Altho' therefore, without any Solecism, we say, The Ox *knows* his Owner, *Isaiah* i. 3. The Spaniel *knows* and *loves* his Master (with such like Expressions) because we find in the Actions of those Creatures, as far as they are capable, the very same Effects that in Man are produced by, and proceed from the Principles of *Knowledge* and *Love*; yet we do not mean that the *Act* or *Habit* of *Knowledge* or *Love* in Man, *internally*, and *in itself alone* considered, is the same in *kind* and only differing in *Degree* from what we suppose to answer or correspond thereto in a *Beast*: For that would be in effect to conclude a *Beast* to be *rational* as well as a *Man*. Now as *Reason* in Man altogether differs from *sensitive Instinct* in a *Brute*, so is there a much greater Difference between that *simple Intuition* by which God acts, and that *rational Manner of Deduction* which is the Source of Human Actions. Altho' therefore, for want of more proper Words, we may be allowed to say of God, as we do of Man, that he is *wise*, that he *knows*, *decrees*, *loves*, *hates*, &c. yet for the Reason already given, we ought not

to imagine that *Wisdom, Knowledge, Decreeing, Love, Hatred, &c. internally, and in themselves*, as they are in *God*, are the same for *kind*, and only differing in *Degree* from what we suppose to answer or correspond thereto in *Man*, but only that the outward Effects of them, as far as they appear to us, are the very same; that is to say, we affirm of *God* that he is *wise*, because he does the very same things that it is evident a *wise Man* would do, supposing him to have Power, and that his *Wisdom* continuing for its *kind* to be still the same as now it is, had neither Limitation nor any other Imperfection. And in like manner we make use of other Words that primarily denote certain Habits or Qualifications in *Man*, to express the corresponding Attributes which, from the outward Effects, we undoubtedly conclude to be in *God*. But yet notwithstanding this *internal Difference* that is most certainly between the Attributes of *God* and the corresponding Qualities in *Man*; I have no other Rule to judge of the *outward Effects*, or Emanations of the former, but by Analogy and Proportion to the latter; and I must (for instance) conclude, that a *wise and good God* will always do whatever a *Man* infinitely wise and good (if I could suppose such a one to be) would do in the like Case: And after the same manner I must reason upon every Attribute of *God*, of which Multitudes of Examples might be given from the Holy Scriptures, where they speak of his *Justice, Mercy, Pity, &c.* if in so plain a Case there were any Necessity to produce them. Here then I have another Opportunity of learning what are the Commands of *God*. From the Works of the Creation I clearly infer not only the Being of *God*, but also many of his Attributes, [§ XVI, XVII.] And what my Reason thus teaches me, I find to be confirmed and farther improved in Holy Scripture; of the Authority whereof I am sufficiently

ficiently persuaded. [§ XVII, XVIII.] Let me then upon all occasions seriously and impartially consider what would a wise, just, good, and merciful *Man* command me to do, supposing he had the Power over me; and the very same I may conclude that God, who has all these Attributes in their utmost Perfection, does in every Case command me.

XXXV. Whilst what I have just now said in the preceding Section, is fresh in the Reader's Memory, I think it not improper to digress a little, and to make use of it to a farther Purpose. All who profess Christianity agree in this, that there is but one God alone; but the Controversy concerning a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature has been no small Disturbance to the Church. The Doctrine itself I take to be very evidently grounded upon the Holy Scripture, the Authority of which is on both Sides allowed; for the *Father*, the *Word* or *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost* are there very often spoken of exactly in the same manner as we always speak of three several *Persons*; and of each of these Persons such Things are frequently said as cannot agree to any but *God*: Whereas all the Objections that are made against it are grounded upon this one palpable Mistake, that the Objectors always understand the Words *Person*, *Nature*, *Substance*, and all other the Terms made use of in this Dispute, in the very same Signification as we use those Words when we speak of Men like ourselves; for Example, *three Human Persons*, say they, *are three distinct Men*; therefore if they were really *three Divine Persons*, they must be *three distinct Gods*. Again, it is absurd, say they, to imagine that God, who is omnipresent, and supreme, and infinite in Power, can be *sent* by any one; but the Father is said to have *sent* the Son, and the Father and the Son are said to have *sent* the Holy Ghost; from whence they would infer, that
therefore.

therefore neither the Son nor the Holy Ghost is God; with much more to the like purpose that frequently occurs in the Writings of the *Unitarians*. But let us see what Answer they themselves would or could give to an Argument or two in the like manner brought against some Doctrines which they maintain as well as we. For Instance, they as well as we, teach that *God is most wise*, and that *he loves Mankind*, or at least all such of them as do not by their Wickedness forfeit all Title to his Love. Let us now suppose that against these two Doctrines Arguments were framed after this manner. When we say of a Man that he is *wise*, we mean that he is one of great *Knowledge*, exact *Consideration*, and accurate *Contrivance* in all that he does: And when we say he *loves* his Friend, we mean that he is *tenderly affected* with whatever good or evil befalls him, and therefore endeavours what he can to procure the one and prevent the other. Now *Knowledge* in a Man is a *Reception* of those *Impressions* which are any way made upon his Mind by outward Objects; *Consideration* and *Contrivance*, properly speaking, are nothing else but a rational *Deduction of Consequences* one from another, and a due *Application* of them to any Business in Hand; and *Tenderness of Affection* necessarily supposes some degree of *Patibility* in the Person who is so affected. But can we say that God who existed, and had all his Attributes from Eternity, and before any thing existed besides himself; can we say of him that he *receives Impressions* from any Objects whatever, or that he did so before any such Object did outwardly exist? Can we say of him who acts by simple *Intuition*, that he first *deduces Consequences* and then *applies* them to any Business whatsoever? Or, lastly, can we say of him, who is perfectly impassible, that he is or can be *affected* with any thing? And if we can say none of these things of God; have

we not the very same Arguments against God's *Wisdom* and his *Love* to Mankind, as the *Unitarians* bring against the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead? And may we not after the same Manner argue against every Attribute and Action of God, which for want of more proper Words, we are forced to express in the very same Terms that we make use of in speaking of whatever corresponds thereunto in Man? Here then a sober *Unitarian*, as well as every other Man, must, I think, have Recourse to the Principles just now laid down [§ XXXIV.] and say that as the *eternal* and *perfect* Nature of God is altogether of a different *kind* from the *created* and *imperfect* Nature of Man; so is there fully the same Difference between the Properties, Attributes, and Actions that exist in, or proceed from those two several Natures. By *Wisdom* and *Love* therefore, as they are *internally* in God, he does not mean the same things for *kind* as he does when he applies the same Words to Man; for the *imperfect* Nature of Man is by no means susceptible of the same *kind* of Properties or Attributes as exist in the perfect Nature of God; nor, consequently, is capable of performing the same *kind* of Actions. But by *Wisdom* and *Love* in God he means certain Attributes of the Divine Nature, which produce the same *outward Effects*, as far as appears to us, as would proceed from *Wisdom* and *Love* in Man; if we could suppose them to be absolutely perfect. Altho' therefore God is not wise with that *kind* or *sort* of Wisdom that Man is, nor loves with that *kind* or *sort* of Love that Man does; yet we truly and properly say that God is *wise* and that he *loves*, and we demonstratively prove these Truths from the *outward Effects* of both, altho' our weak Understanding cannot frame a Notion what the Divine Wisdom and Love *internally* and *in themselves* are, when at the same Time we are sensible that

that we enjoy the Benefit and Comfort of them both. This I take to be a rational and satisfactory Answer, and such as is to be made use of, whenever any Arguments are drawn from the bare Signification of any Words that are in common applied both to God and Man, or any other Creature. Let us then see whether this very Answer will not in the same manner clear up all the Difficulty that arises from such sort of Objections as those above mentioned, which are usually made against the Doctrine of a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead: For when we say that there are *three Persons* in the Unity of the Divine Nature, we do not mean such *kind* of Persons as *three Men* are, any more than by *Wisdom, Knowledge, Love*, or any of the Attributes or Actions of God, we mean the same *sort* or *kind* of Qualifications or Actions, as we do when we apply the same Words to Man. But our Meaning (as well as in so sublime a Doctrine I am able to express it) is, that in the Divine Nature, which is but one (and that *numerically*, as the Schools speak) there is a threefold Distinction, *internally*, and *as it is in itself*, altogether incomprehensible to us; but *outwardly* in the Holy Scripture represented to us under the *personal* Names of the *Father*, the *Word* or *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost* or *Spirit*; to each of whom we there find distinct *personal* Actions ascribed, and *personal* Expressions always accommodated. Altho' therefore it is beyond the Power of Human Understanding to conceive this Mystery *as it is in itself*; yet by Faith we believe it to be as God has *represented* it unto us, and this Representation we take to be a sufficient Foundation for all such Duties as are consequent upon, or arise from the Doctrine: And because it is impossible to express our Meaning without the use of Words, nor will any Language furnish us with other Words to express the things of God, but such as are used to signify

signify what we apprehend to have the *nearest Correspondence* thereto in *Man*; for this Reason we are forced to make use of the Words *Person, Substance, &c.* not that they do denote unto us the things as they are in themselves (for in that respect we expressly own them to be *incomprehensible*) but only as they are analogically, and according to our Capacity, *represented* unto us by God in his Holy Word, as a Foundation for several Christian Duties. And when the *Son* or the *Holy Ghost* are said to be *sent* (which was the other Objection mentioned) by *sending* it is not intended that *Directions were given them to go from one place to another*, in the manner as one Man does to another, when he is said to *send* him; but to *send*, as it is thus applied to the *Father* or the *Son*, signifies an Act *in itself* indeed to us incomprehensible; but as near as may be in God, corresponding to the Action of *sending* in Man; and which, for want of a more proper Word, we are forced to express by the same Name. This I take to be a rational Answer to those two Objections of the *Unitarians* which I have above proposed, and sufficient to satisfy every Man who is content, with *St. Paul*, as long as he is in this Life, to *know* the Things of *G O D* in part, and to *prophecy* of them in part, and to *see* them as *through a Glass darkly*, or in a *Riddle*, as the Margin of our Bible renders it from the Greek, *1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12*. Nor is there any other Difficulty in the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as it is expressed either in the Holy Scripture, or in the Creeds or Liturgy of our Church, but what in the same manner may be fairly accounted for, altho' I must own that some of the Explications, which private and particular Men have given of this Doctrine, are not in my Opinion defensible: And if too many Men had not, in all Ages of the Church, been more fond of subtle Notions, and

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Victory in speculative Disputations, than of promoting Peace and true Christian Piety, so many Controversies had not been multiplied, as have been about this and other Articles of our Religion; the many evil Consequences of which ought to stir up every good Man to have recourse to the only Remedy which in a rational Way, and such as is proper to Men, can ever be hoped to put an End to them; I mean first to fix and agree upon the *Notions of Things*, and the *proper, analogical, or metaphorical Signification of Words*, before they enter into such fierce Disputations about them.

XXXVI. I take this Way of accounting for the Attributes, Actions, and Persons of the Godhead, to be not only in itself very satisfactory; but also if rightly understood, of great Importance towards putting an End to all those Disputes that have arisen in the World about these matters; and if the Reader is not satisfied with what I have here said, I desire him, before he passes his Censure, to have recourse to the School Divines who have handled this Subject; particularly I recommend to him *Tho. Aquin. contra Gent. cum Com. Fran. de Silo. Lib. I. Cap. 32, 33, 34.* * where he will find these three Things expressly maintained; First that when we make use of the same Words in speaking of God, and of any other thing; such Words are not to be understood *univocally*, or in one and altogether the same Signification: The Nature or Essence of God not being of the *same kind* or sort with that of any other thing whatsoever. Secondly that yet such Words are not to be understood to be merely *equivocal*, or the same in *sound* only but without any manner of Agreement in their Sense or Signification.

* Nihil de Deo & aliis rebus *univocè* prædicatur. Ea quæ de Deo & aliis rebus prædicantur, non dicuntur purè *equivocè*. Quæ dicuntur de Deo & Creaturis, dicuntur *analogicè*.

For there may and ought to be an *Agreement*, tho' not an *univocal* one, in the Signification of every Word that is applied to God and any Creature; that is to say, when at any Time we speak of God in the same Words as we do of a Creature, the use of such Words ought not to be altogether groundless and precarious, but founded upon some just and sufficient Reason. Thirdly therefore that such Words are always to be understood *analogically*, that is to say with some reasonable and well grounded *Resemblance* of Signification in such their different Application: For since, in this Life, we have no *immediate* or sensible Knowledge of God, but only trace as much as we can of his Nature and Attributes, from those *Effects* which immediately incur into our Senses and Understanding, and of which we can demonstrate him to be the *Cause*; either we must have no Conception at all of such his Nature and Attributes; or else we must conceive them as well as we can (and in such a Manner as may be a sufficient Foundation for our Duty) from some faint and dark Resemblance, which we apprehend to be between them and those of some of his Creatures. Or if the Reader is not willing to trouble himself with the difficult Terms of the Schools; let him read *His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Dublin's* Sermon, entitled, *Divine Predestination and Fore-knowledge consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will*, where he will find this Matter very clearly and satisfactorily handled. I have indeed read two several Answers to this Sermon, but neither of them have had the least Influence upon me towards the Alteration of my Judgment or Opinion. One of them, without any direct Confutation of the Doctrine, endeavours to load it with many ill Consequences, which do not at all follow from it, if it be rightly understood; and the other most palpably mistakes the Doctrine itself:

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And because his *Grace* teaches that *Wisdom, Foresight, Understanding, &c.* in *God* are things of another kind than what they are in *Man*; therefore the Answerer would put it upon him, as if he had in Effect said that *God* is not *wise*, neither *foresees* or *understands* at all, &c. which is plainly as far from his *Grace's* Meaning, as the thing in itself is both impious and ridiculous. But it is time to return from this Digression; which being of great Importance in itself, has almost insensibly run into a greater Length than I at first intended it.

XXXVII. To proceed then in the Way I was going: That *Christianity* has much the Advantage of all Religions, as in every other Respect, so particularly in that of the Probability of the Arguments which are brought to prove the Truth of it, of which I have just given a Hint [§ XVII.] and that these Arguments, joined with the internal Purity and Goodness of the Religion itself (I mean as it is genuine and unmixed) are sufficient to move a sober man to frame his Life according to it, and for so doing to expect his Reward hereafter: That the genuine Doctrines and Rules of Christianity are contained in the New Testament, and as much of the Old as is not abrogated and the Obligation thereof cancel'd; and that the Scope, Design, Sense, and Meaning of those Writings is still truly preserved both in the original Books and several Translations of them that are extant in the World [§ XVIII.] All this, I say, upon the most serious and attentive Enquiry I can make, appears to me to be much more credible than the contrary; and, consequently, is sufficient to determine my Choice, and in pursuance thereof ought to regulate my Practice [§ XXVIII.] Here then I have a farther Opportunity of coming to the Knowledge of God's Commands; I am not debarred from reading, or hearing the Holy Scriptures read in my

own Mother Tongue ; and tho' many points of *Speculation*, and those of diverse Kinds, which there occur, are beyond the reach of my Comprehension; yet matters of *Practice*, or what I am *commanded* to do with respect to God, to myself, and to all Mankind, seems all along to be so plainly delivered, that it is hard for an unprejudiced Person to mistake the Meaning, at least of any of the great and important Rules of Duty which are therein contained : Or if at any time a Doubt or Difficulty arises in any Matter of Practice that I am not able of myself to clear up, I can easily have recourse to one or more sober and prudent Men, who, from Reason and other Passages of Scripture compared together, may help me to the Solution of it: Which Solution I may possibly very well understand, and sufficiently judge of when it is fairly offered me by another; altho' of myself, and without some such Help, I never should have been able to have found it out. And if after the sincere and diligent Use of these several Opportunities, which God in his good Providence has put into my Power, I yet remain in Ignorance or under a Mistake concerning any thing which he has commanded me to do; I have all the assurance that may be, that a wise and good God will never punish me for the want of that Knowledge, which it was at least *morally* impossible for me to attain unto. [§ XXI.]

XXXVIII. But some there are who tell me that the only certain Way of coming to the Knowledge of all Things that are necessary to my Eternal Salvation, is to have recourse to the *Church*, and to receive and follow whatever she teaches. With all my Heart! Let me but find the certain Way to *Heaven*; and it is altogether indifferent to me, from whom I am to learn it. But, if I act like a rational and conscientious Min, before I can do this which they would have me; I must have clear and full Satisfaction

tisfaction touching these three Things: First, how shall I be assured that God has commanded me to give myself up to the Guidance of any such Society of Men, who are called by this Denomination? For if he has not commanded it, it is certain that no Obligation can lie upon me to do it in order to my Salvation. [§ III.] Secondly, in the midst of all the Disputes that are about this Matter, how shall I be sufficiently informed who those Men are that *alone* do compose and constitute this *Church*, which is thus to be my *Guide*? For if I have not some *authentick Rule* whereby to know this, I may very innocently mistake one Society of Men for the *Church*, instead of another. And Thirdly, because it is impossible (and therefore not my Duty, § XIII) for me to apply myself to each particular Member of the *Church*; how shall I know who it is that has *unquestionable Authority* to propose the Dictates of the *Church* unto me, and also to explain them, if I do not sufficiently apprehend or understand them? And does he dwell within such a Distance from me, as that, upon all Occasions, I can possibly have recourse unto him? For it is manifestly as good for me to have *no Guide at all*, as not to have some sure and certain Way, that I may depend upon, of knowing and understanding *what the Directions are which my Guide gives me*. To these three Questions I have long been seeking for (not an artful, superficial, and plausible, but) a clear, solid, and satisfactory Answer, but never yet could meet with it from any of those Men, who yet would persuade me *† to live in an entire Submission to the Decisions of their Church, and not to inform myself of any other thing, save only to know what she*

† De vivre dans une entiere soumission aux decisions de l'Eglise, & de ne m'informer point d'autre chose que de sçavoir ce qu'elle nous enseigne, ne pouvant me tromper en l'ecoutant. Part. I. Instr. 6.

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teaches us, as being impossible for me to be deceived while I hearken to her: As the Bishop of Viviers teaches his New Converts to do, in the Instructions by his Order, and with authentick Approbation and Privilege, published for them. But since my Eyes are of the same Texture and Use with those of all other Men, and G O D has been pleased to give the Light of the Sun to me as well as unto them; what imaginable Reason can there be why I should hoodwink myself, and blindfold follow any Number of Men whatsoever, without making the least Enquiry whether the Way they intend to lead me is the safest and surest to that Place whither I am desirous to travel? Did our Blessed Saviour or his Apostles tell those to whom they preached, that thus they must believe and do, in order to their Salvation, because this was the Belief and Practice of the Church, and therefore to be embraced and followed without any farther Enquiry? Or would the Gospel, do we think, have ever made such a Progress in the World as in a few Years it did, if no better Reason than this had been given for it? On the contrary, they dealt with Men as with Rational Beings, they argued with them from the Principles of Reason, the Evidence of Miracles, and the Authority of the Old Testament, wherever it was received and owned, and always allowed and directed Men to examine the Strength of their Arguments, and accordingly to determine their Judgment. If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, tho' ye believe not me, believe the Works, John x. 37, 38. Yea and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? Luke. xii. 57. Prove all Things; hold fast that which is good, 1 Thessl. v. 21. Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God, 1 John iv. 1. I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say, 1 Cor. x. 15. Be ready to give an Answer to every man that asketh you a Reason of the

Hope that is in you, 1 Pet. iii. 15. These are the plain and fair Directions of the *Holy Scripture* as well as of sober *Reason*. But that a Man should never enquire into the Grounds of this or that particular Doctrine, nor inform himself of any other thing save only to know what the Church teaches, and then to believe and receive it all wholly and solely upon her bare Authority, has not the least Countenance from either. When the Men of Berea searched the Scriptures whether those things which St. Paul preached were so, Act. xvii. 11. did he disapprove of what they did, or tell them they took a wrong Method? And when Felix sent for him and heard him concerning the Faith in Christ, Act. xxiv. 24. Had he told him that now there was a Christian Church planted, all that he had to do was to inform himself what were the Doctrines therein received and approved, and then to embrace all such Doctrines without any farther Enquiry, the Governor would certainly have despised him, and had much more Reason to have thought him besides himself than his Successor Festus had, Ch. xxvi. 24. But the great Apostle took a very different Method: The Text tells us *he reasoned* with him, and when, amongst other things, he came after this convincing Manner to press the Duties of *Righteousness* and *Temperance* and the Doctrine of a *Judgment to come* home upon his Conscience, it for the present at least, awakened him and made him tremble, Ch. xxiv. 25. But enough of this Controversy, and indeed I think more than enough in so very plain a Case. Upon the whole then I conclude (and that, as I think, very reasonably from all that has been said) that as the very best and utmost I can do, in order come to a true and satisfactory Knowledge of the Commands of God, is to seek for the best Information therein that I can get from the Light of my own Reason, from the Holy Scriptures, and other

other Books that I am capable of having recourse to, and from the Conversation of such Men as I have most Reason to believe can best inform me, and will not deceive me; so, if according to my Capacity, I do all this with constant *Diligence* and unfeigned *Sincerity*, and without any Byass upon my Mind or Understanding either from my own Lusts, Passions, or Inclinations, or from any thing that is external to me, such as the Honours or Profits of this World, or the gratifying of this or that Man or Party of Men; and if, as far as I can discover what the Commands of God are, I honestly and carefully put them in Practice, and make them the constant and unalterable Rule of all my Actions, I have done all that lies in my Power to do in this matter; and, consequently, all that a wise and good God can possibly be supposed to require from me [§ XIII. XXI.] and if after all the above enquiry, I prove to be mistaken touching any one or more of God's Commands, how far I may yet assure myself of a *Reward* for my Sincerity I pretend not to know: But this I can depend upon, that He who of his own Free Will created me, will never *punish* me for not doing a Thing, whatever it is, that appears to be beyond my Ability to do. [§ XXVI.]

XXXIX. After many anxious and disquieting Thoughts, in the Time of my Youth, concerning my Everlasting Salvation, having at last, through the Blessing of God, with great Comfort and Satisfaction, settled my Mind in Ease upon the Principles of which I have hitherto been giving an Account; about twenty Years ago I ventured to publish to the World a brief and plain Account of the Success I had met with in my Search after true Religion, and therein first of the *Doctrines* which are the main Foundations or Springs of Duty [§ XXVII.] and then of the *Laws* or *Commands* of God, which are the Rule of it, in
a little

a little Book to which I gave the Title of *A Gentleman's Religion*, consisting of three Parts and an *Appendix*: And some Years after I made another, and much shorter Draught of the same Things for Substance, designed for the Information of the meanest Capacities, and called it *An Essay towards making the Knowledge of Religion easy*. If any man therefore, after reading these Papers, shall think it worth his while to know more of my poor Thoughts touching such Things as are of the greatest and even eternal Importance to us all, I refer him to those two little Books, only desiring him, first, candidly to interpret, and supply the Defect of all such Expressions as there he shall find to want that due *Exactness*, which even at this Time I am far from pretending to be Master of; and then that he would carefully examine all that I have delivered by the Rule of his own Reason, and that of the Holy Scriptures. But because there are some Difficulties, which (if I had then sufficiently thought of them) I ought in the former of the two Books mentioned to have proposed and answered, I will now, before I make an end, seriously and impartially consider what return ought to be made to them.

XL. In the first place then: The *Assent* which Men give to the Truth of any Doctrines or Propositions, from the different Grounds upon which it is, or may be given, takes unto itself three several Denominations. When a Truth is either so clear by its own Light, or so evidently follows from some other Truth that is so, as not to admit of the least Possibility of a Doubt, the Assent which I give to such a Truth as this, we call *Science* or *Knowledge*: When the Evidence which I have for a Truth is only *probable*, that is to say, leaves some Room (tho' but little) for a Doubt, my Assent to such a Truth is what we usually style *Opinion*: And lastly, when my

my Assent is grounded purely and only upon the *Testimony* of another, this is what we properly term by the name of *Belief*, or *Faith*, which is commonly distinguished into *Divine* and *Human*, according to the Difference of the Testimony upon which a Man gives his Assent. And yet, notwithstanding this Distinction, these Terms are, in common Discourse, very often used in a greater Latitude, and frequently put the one for the other: For Example; that God is; that *the Worlds were framed by him*; and that *he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, are Truths which to me appear to be strictly demonstrable from the plainest Principles of self-evident Reason, and yet we are said to *believe* these Things, and the Assent which we give unto them, is called *Faith*, Heb. xi. 3, 6. And upon what ground soever we give our Assent unto the several Truths which are the necessary Foundation of those respective Duties which are to be built upon them, [§ XXVII.] it is sufficient to denominate us *true Believers*. But since, in all Cases whatsoever, *Assent* or *Dissent* is a necessary Act of the human Understanding; and consequently (formally taken) can never be the Matter of a Divine Command (as I have observed, § XXII.) the first Difficulty will be to shew what is the meaning of those Passages of Holy Scripture which require *Faith* or *Belief*, as a *Duty commanded* and *required* by God, 1 Joh. iii. 23. or threaten Punishment to those that want it, as being guilty of a Crime, Mar. xvi. 16.

XLI. I answer, that since all *Speech* derives its Signification not from any natural, unalterable, or inflexible Necessity, but wholly and entirely from human Agreement, Custom, and Imposition, the plain Consequence is, that whatever Latitude or Analogy is upon any occasion generally allowed or received, in the Interpretation of any Words or Schemes
of

of Expression; must so far always be taken into the Construction of Holy Scripture, as that it may never be irreconcilable with the plain, evident, and allowed Dictates of Reason; nor ought we to charge even mere *human* Writings (and much less those of the *sacred Pen-men*) with Contradictions or Absurdities, if by a fair and candid Interpretation of the Words, they may, according to any usual or allowed way of speaking, be brought to admit of another Meaning. Now altho' to assent to the Truth of any thing, without sufficient Evidence for it, or to dissent where I have such Evidence, is altogether out of my Power, and consequently can never be the Matter of a Divine Command; yet since the keeping of my Mind in a *due Disposition* for the *impartial Consideration* of such Evidence as is offered me, and the *diligent Application* of myself to such Consideration, is no more than what does, or may in many Cases, entirely depend upon the Freedom of my own Will; and upon the Supposition of such a Disposition and Application, assent to a Truth for which such Evidence is offered must of Necessity follow, [§ XXII.] even the very *Act of Assent* may in the common way of Speech be called a *Duty*, whenever it is a necessary Consequence from any other thing that is so. It being then most evidently my Duty always to keep my Mind in a right Disposition for the Reception of Truth, [§ XXVII.] and to be diligent in my Enquiry after all such Truths as may help me to find out the Commands of God, [§ XXIV, XXV.] wherever God has given me *sufficient Evidence* of any such Truth, if I do not give my Assent unto it, I am certainly guilty of a Sin: But then the Sin itself lies not properly in my *want of Assent* (which is a thing not within the Compass of my Power, § XXII.) but in the want of that *due Disposition and Application of Mind*, which

if I had taken right Care to preserve and maintain my Assent, upon such Evidence as I suppose to be afforded me, must of Necessity have followed. It is in my Power either to shut my Eyes, or to keep them open, and to turn them to or from an Object: But supposing my Eyes to be open, and otherwise sufficiently well disposed, and no Obstruction to be in the way, to see or not to see a proper Object in a good Light and at a competent Distance before them, is not a thing of Choice, but of absolute and unavoidable Necessity. The Application is so easy that I need not make it.

XLII. If therefore I always keep my Mind in a fitting Disposition to receive *Truth*, wherever I meet with it; and if, according to my Capacity and Opportunities, I am sincerely diligent in the Search of it; whenever God in the Course of his good Providence is pleased to offer me sufficient Evidence for it, I must as unavoidably give my Assent to it, as I cannot but *see* an Object of Sight, that in a clear and open Light is placed before me within a due Distance, when my Eyes are open, and turned towards it: And if from all such Truths as I come thus to the Knowledge of, I impartially infer all the Commands of God, or Rules of Duty, that I can find to follow from them, and, with my utmost Diligence and Sincerity, do constantly conform my Practice thereunto; I have then done all that in this Case lies within my Power, and consequently all that God can be supposed to require from me. [§ XXI.] But here arises a second Difficulty, namely, How far it is lawful for any *Church* to require from me an *absolute and explicit Assent* to any, and what Doctrines? And, Thirdly, If any such Assent may be required, What Degree of it [§ XXVIII.] is sufficient, in order to my making such a Profession thereof as is usually demanded?

XLIII. For a clear and satisfactory Answer to the second Difficulty, I lay down the following *Conclusions*. First, *If any Church shall positively pronounce Damnation against any Person, barely for not believing or assenting to any Doctrine whatsoever, without making any Allowance either for his want of Evidence, or of Capacity to apprehend it, such a Church I take to be in a very plain and palpable Error.* How far such an Assent may be reckoned a *Duty*, I think I have sufficiently explained [§ XLI.] And whosoever pronounces Damnation upon the want of any thing beyond what is so, most certainly passes a Sentence, which God will never ratify. Secondly, Since the very Notion of a *Church* consists in this, that it is a *Society* joined together under a *religious Government or Ministry*, and maintaining *Communion* among themselves, in order to everlasting Salvation; *the very utmost to which the Power of any Church (Universal or Particular) can be supposed in this Case to extend, is to require an explicit Assent to some certain Doctrines as a Condition* (not absolutely of *Salvation*, which to grant or withhold is only in the Power of God, but) *of Communion, or of being admitted to a Share in its Government or Ministry*: Nor ought any Church, in Reason, to say or mean more upon this Occasion than thus, *viz.* You shall not be owned as a Member of our Communion, except, amongst other things, you expressly profess your Belief of such certain Truths, which we commonly call *Articles of Faith*; nor shall you be admitted to the Ministry, or to any Share in Church Government amongst us, except you in like manner give your Assent to certain other Doctrines, which we commonly call *Articles of Peace*: But if you cannot give your Assent to these Truths or Doctrines, and thereby are excluded from the Ministry, or any part in our Church Government, or even from our Communion itself, what Allow-

ance God, who is the Searcher of Hearts, will make for your want either of Capacity or Evidence, is what he himself alone is able to determine. *Thirdly*, That *there are some Doctrines, without an Assent to which a Man ought not to be admitted even into the Communion of any Church whatsoever, is what no Man, who has any Sense of Religion, will offer to gainsay.* For Example, That *there is a God, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, are Truths, which he that should refuse to assent to, would certainly never gain admittance into any Society embodied together in the Profession of any Religion that ever was or can be in the World: And the same may be said of divers other Doctrines with relation to every Church that professes *Christianity*. But if we would have some fit and settled Rule whereby we may know to what Doctrines a Church may require an Assent as a Condition of her bare *Communion*, or farther, of a Share in her *Ministry* or *Government*, I farther answer,

XLIV. First, *Where our Assent to any Truth must needs be presupposed unto, and is the necessary Foundation of that Obedience which we owe unto God's Commands, in order to our eternal Salvation, such an Assent as this may explicitly be required by any Church from every one whom she admits into her Communion.* [See § XXVII.] And however true any Doctrin may be, yet if our Ignorance of it or Dissent from it is not inconsistent with such Obedience, he that refuses to give his Assent to such a Doctrin, ought not, on account of such Refusal, to be rejected or excluded. For since the very Design of Church Communion is in order to eternal Salvation [§ XLIII.] and nothing is or can be necessary to Salvation but only Obedience to God's Commands [§ III.] it follows, that so much (and no more) may be required unto Church Communion, as is necessary in order to such Obedience; meaning

by Obedience a Conformity of Life and Actions unto that *ordinary* Rule of God's Will, which he has been pleased to make known unto us. Secondly, *It may be lawful, and in many Cases is highly convenient, to require from those who are admitted into the Ministry, or any Share of the Government of the Church, an Assent to more Doctrines than what ought to be required only as a Condition of Communion.* By Church Communion alone a Man partakes of the ordinary Means which God has appointed to Salvation (such as Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and joint Prayer and Worship with the Congregation) from which Means therefore no Man ought, either in Charity or Justice, to be excluded, if he be duly qualified for them: But the Offices of the *Ministry* and *Church Government* are appointed as Means, not of *Salvation* to those who exercise them, but of *Edification* to the rest of the People: For which Edification if sufficient Provision be made, or as good Provision as the Circumstances of things will admit of, it is neither unjust nor uncharitable for those who are in Authority, to prescribe any Terms, that are not in themselves unlawful, and may any way conduce to the Peace or other Benefit of the Church, as Conditions, without a Compliance with which no Man shall be allowed to exercise or take any such Office upon him: And upon this very reasonable Principle a Church may, amongst other things, require an Assent to more Doctrines than what are thought necessary to Salvation, from all such as She admits to be either Ministers or Church Governors within her Community.

XLV. But then it will be asked (especially considering the Obscurity, in which some Doctrines professed by divers Churches are involved) what Degree of Assent is necessary [See § XXVIII.] for the making of such a Profession, as our Church in both the Cases just now mentioned always requires? This

was the third Difficulty proposed at the end of §XLII. to which I come now to give a clear and distinct Answer. In order whereunto I take it for granted, that where no Assent is inwardly given, none ought to be outwardly professed; and that he who has no manner of Notion of the Meaning of a Doctrine, cannot possibly give his Assent to it: Upon which I lay down this as my first Conclusion, *viz.* That *no Man ought to profess an Assent to any Doctrine, until he has some Notion of the Meaning of it.* Let us suppose that the Twelve Apostles were now alive, and that they should propose a Doctrine in a Language which I do not at all understand; I might indeed in this Case, and I should *assent to their Veracity*, and believe that whatever Doctrine they should propose were most certainly true; but for me to give a *direct Assent to the Doctrine itself*, would be impossible. For thus to assent to a Doctrine, is neither more nor less than to *acknowledge the Truth of it*: And in the very Notion of acknowledging the Truth of a Proposition, *some Apprehension*, at least, of the *Meaning* of it is of Necessity implied: And therefore before I can lawfully profess my Assent to any Doctrine, I must in some degree understand the Sense and Purport of it.

XLVI. Whether a Doctrine be true or false, there are *Degrees of Apprehension*, even barely with respect to the *Meaning* of it. For Example, A Man of a clear and good Sight distinctly *understands* all that you say about Light and Colours: He, whose Eyes have, from his Infancy, been *very dim*, will in proportion to his Sight, have a less perfect and more confused Notion of your Discourse: But if a Man has been perfectly *blind from his Birth*, altho' it be impossible for him, for want of a proper Faculty, to have an *immediate or direct Idea* of any of the Objects or Instruments of Sight; yet by way of *Analogy, Similitude, or Comparison*, he so far may have an Appre-

hension of them, as to be fully convinced that all that is said about this Matter, is not a multitude of Words without any Signification at all, but really and truly has a *Meaning*; altho' he neither has nor can have any Conception of it, save what is begotten in him by the means of some other of his Senses, representing something unto him that bears some sort of proportion to those things, which, for want of his having proper Organs, can find no *direct* Entrance or Admittance into his Understanding: Of which I have given a more full Account in the *Appendix to a Gentleman's Religion*: And that there are also *Degrees of Assent*, with respect to the *Truth* of a Doctrine, in proportion to those both of Apprehension and Proof, I have already shewn § XXVIII. The second Conclusion then, which I lay down for the clearing up of this third Difficulty, is, that as *the lowest or weakest Degree of Assent to any Truth* is a rational Foundation for the Regulation of my Actions in conformity to it (as I have shewn § XXVIII.) so is it *sufficient to warrant my open Profession of it, whenever I am thereunto lawfully required*; and that for the like Reason as I have there given.

XLVII. Let us then suppose that the Question were put to one of a mean Capacity, whether he believes *the Resurrection of the Body*? it may be he has but a very *obscure Notion of the meaning of a Resurrection*, or what that Body is that shall arise, and of what Parts or Particles it shall consist. Again, when he considers the common Objections that have been made against this Doctrine, and particularly that of one human Body's Passage, through divers Changes, at last into the Nourishment of another; perhaps he is not without some *Doubt or Hesitation* in his Mind, even touching the *Possibility* of it. But on the other hand, when he calls to mind that the infinite Power of God is not to be measured by his scant Reason or Apprehension,

henſion, and remembers how expreſſy the Reſurre-
 ction of the Body is aſſerted in the Holy Scriptures
 (of whoſe Authority we ſuppoſe him to be ſufficient-
 ly convinced, § XVIII.) altho' he is not able altoge-
 ther to clear up that Miſt of Doubt and Obſcurity
 which had taken Poſſeſſion of his Mind; yet finding
 the Arguments for a Reſurrection to have a greater
 Influence upon him than the Objections which are
 brought againſt it, his Aſſent inclines that way
 (altho', after all, perhaps it is but weakly and faint-
 ly) and for this Reaſon I ſay that ſuch a Man, upon
 all proper Occaſions, may and ought to make an o-
 pen Profeſſion of this, as well as of any other Arti-
 cle of the Chriſtian Faith. But you will ſay, is ſuch
 a weak and faint Aſſent as this ſufficient to warrant a
 Man's ſaying, *All this I ſtedfaſtly believe*, which is the
 Form of Profeſſion that the Church requires? I an-
 ſwer, that *Stedfaſtneſs* of Belief does not conſiſt in
 the *Strength of that ſpeculative Aſſent* which a Man
 gives to any Doctrines (which, properly ſpeaking,
 is not within his Power, § XXII.) but altogether in
 that *Firmneſs of Purpoſe and Reſolution*, which he forms
 within himſelf, of leading his Life in Conformity to
 it. Let us ſuppoſe (for Example) that a Man is not
 free from ſome Doubts even concerning the Truth
 of Chriſtianity, but yet, at the ſame time, with a
 moſt fixt and ſettled Purpoſe of Heart, leads his
 Life in the very ſame manner as he would and ought
 to do, if his Perſuaſion concerning its Truth were
 as lively and ſtrong as any Man is or can be capable
 of entertaining; ſuch a Man as this, notwithſtand-
 ing his Doubts in *Speculation*, yet in the *practical* Senſe
 of the Expreſſion, is a *ſtedfaſt Believer*, and *holds faſt*
the Profeſſion of his Faith without wavering, Heb. x.
 23. For true *ſaving Faith* is not to be meaſured by
 its intrinſick *Firmneſs* (which, properly ſpeaking,
 is rather a *Comfort* or a *Reward* than a *Duty*) but al-

together by its *Fruitfulness* in holy Desires and good Works: Nor is this only agreeable to the main Tenour and Purport of the *New Testament*, but to the clearest and plainest *Reason* also; which abundantly assures us, that a wise and good God will never require that, as a Condition of Salvation *on our part to be performed*, which most manifestly is beyond the Verge of our Power.

XLVIII. As far as a Man is at liberty to make Profession of his Faith and Religion in Words of his *own choosing*, he ought always to express his Thoughts in the *clearest* and most *determinate* manner that he can. For no other Reason can be imagined, why a Man should *make Choice* of such Expressions as are doubtful, rather than those that are plain; except it be that he desires (by some at least) to be understood after a different manner from what he privately means within himself; which sort of Collusion or Dissimulation, as it is not easily justifiable in any Case whatsoever, so in Matters of *Religion* is it altogether wicked and abominable. But where a *certain Form of Words*, containing one or more Doctrines of Religion, is *already settled* and established, and a Man is required, out of Peace and Unity, or in Obedience to lawful Authority, to profess his Assent thereunto, and that without imposing upon, or requiring from him any manner of Comment or Explication; if there be no Sentence or Expression in that Form, but what is fairly capable of such an Interpretation as is in itself true, I see no reason why any honest Man, having this Apprehension of the Matter, may not subscribe or profess his Assent to it; provided, that if at any time he be lawfully called upon to explain the manner, in which he understands what he has thus subscribed or given his Assent unto, he do it clearly and explicitly, and, as much as lies in his Power, without any Ambiguity or

or Obscurity. For if the Words of such a Form are *doubtful*, why must I be obliged to understand them in such a Sense as contains *false* Doctrine, if they are fairly reconcileable to that which is true? Or if they are very *general* or of great *Latitude*, what Necessity is there why I should *restrain* or *limit* them at all, since the Authority which imposed them, has not thought fit either to give or require any Explication or Limitation of them, beyond what is contained in the Words themselves? And in order to lessen the Number of *unnecessary Controversies* in the Christian World, I wish it were seriously laid to heart, *First*, That very often the Dispute is not, *What has God commanded us to believe or do* (which yet is all that is necessary to Salvation, §IV.) but only, *Is this particular Doctrine true or not?* the Determination whereof may be of very little or no Concern perhaps to any Man, who by his Religion aims at nothing but the Favour of God and everlasting Happiness. Nor, *Secondly*, Whether *such or such a Doctrine*, as it is nakedly delivered by the Church, but as it is clothed with this or that Interpretation, Limitation, or Extension, be true? And yet if, for Peace sake, or in Obedience to Authority, I profess my Assent to any Doctrine of the Church; as I ought thereby to mean all that the Church has *expressed*, so is it most unreasonable to expect any more from me. For if the Church had required more, why should she not plainly tell me so? And where she has made no Declaration of her Meaning, how is it possible for me to know it? You will say perhaps that the Sense of the Generality of Men, eminent for Learning and Knowledge in every Church, is to be look'd upon as the Sense of the Church itself: But besides that, there is a great Difference between the Sense even of *every* particular Man *apart*, or in his private Capacity, and that of the *whole* Society *collectively*, either in itself, or by its legal

legal Representatives, and that, in the midst of those various Explications of speculative Doctrines, which often are advanced by learned Men even of the same Church, it is not easy (especially for a Man of little Learning) to determine what, in controverted Points, is the Sense of the *generality* of such eminent Men; it is sufficient to me that the Church does not require my Assent to this same Sense, in case I were able to find it out and determine it (for if she had required any such thing, she ought to have said so, which she has not done) but only to those *particular Doctrines* which she has expressly established, and that in the very same (and none other) Words as she has delivered them, however *general* or *comprehensive* they may appear to be. And if the Reader will but duly consider this, and at the same time take notice of the Account which [§ XXXV.] I have given of the Word *Person*; and also remember that the Word *Necessary* very often imports not an absolute and indispensable Necessity, but only denotes that such a thing is a † *Duty*, and that the *Act of Assent* can be no farther a Duty than as I have explained it [§ XLI.] as also that these Expressions [*to keep the Faith whole and undefiled, and to believe faithfully*] do carry no more in them than what (§ XLVII.) I have shewn to be the Meaning of *steadfastly to believe*; if (I say) he sufficiently considers all this, and has a greater Love for Peace and Unity than for Disputation and Contention, he will make no difficulty of subscribing or saying *Amen* to that *Creed* which commonly goes under the Name of *St. Athanasius*: And as for our *Thirty Nine Articles*, let every Sentence in them be taken in that *Generality* and *Latitude*, with which they who composed them were content (for

† Note, that what in the *Athanasian Creed* we translate, Before all things it is necessary, in the Greek is πρὸ πάντων
 264.

the Satisfaction of opposite contending Parties) to express themselves; and I may safely challenge any Man to find a false Proposition in any one of them: Nor therefore can I see the least Reason, why any Man, who is rightly informed, and of a peaceable Temper, should refuse by his Subscription to give such an Assent to them, as our Church requires from all who are admitted to Holy Orders.

A P P E N D I X.

FOR the more satisfactory clearing up of what I have said touching St. *Athanasius's* Creed, I think it not improper to give the Reader the following Paraphrase of it, in which I have retain'd all the Words of the Creed itself, and have therewith interwoven such things as (in my Apprehension) are either presuppos'd by, contain'd or imply'd in, or evidently consistent with it, and necessary or useful, in order to the clear and full understanding of it, I mean as far as we are capable, and the Belief of it is requir'd either by God or any Christian Church.

The PARAPHRASE.

How far God (whose Authority has no Limits but those of his own Attributes) has reserv'd to himself a Power either of barely pardoning (that is to say, not punishing) such Ignorance and Errors as are altogether (or in a great measure) involuntary, or of rewarding the sincere Endeavours of those who diligently seek after Truth, and yet miss of it, is none of my Intention at present to give my Thoughts: But whereas in his infinite Wisdom he

has

has thought fit in his Gospel to reveal and make known unto us a sure and certain Way to eternal Salvation; *Whosoever*, according to this Way or Method thus made known unto us, *will be eternally saved*, in the first place, and *before all other things*, it is incumbent on him and *necessary* that he so embrace and hold that Faith which was once deliver'd unto the Saints, *Jude 3.* which we commonly call *the Catholick* or universal Faith (because it was every where universally preach'd and taught to all Christian Churches) as that it may be a sufficient Foundation for the Performance of all those Duties, which God by the same Gospel requires from him.

Which Faith except every one, to whom it is sufficiently propos'd or preach'd, do, according to his Capacity, embrace, and also keep whole and undivided, without knowingly or carelessly giving way to any Doctrines or Practices that are contrary to, or destructive of it, he is guilty of great Sin, and (if he does not timely repent) without doubt he shall be condemn'd by God, and perish everlastingly.

And whereas no Doctrine is more plainly taught in the Gospel (as well as in the Law and the Prophets) than that there is but one God alone, and yet such things are as plainly said of the Father, the Son (or Word, as he is also call'd) and the Holy Ghost, as cannot agree to any but God only; I am perswaded that the fundamental Principle of *the Catholick Faith is this*, that we so believe these things, as that they may have a due Influence on our Practice; and as by our being Christians we dedicate ourselves to the Service of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; so should we accordingly worship one God in Trinity, and this Trinity in Unity.

Neither confounding the Notion which we have of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as if there were no real Distinction between them, whom so often we find to be spoken of in Holy Scripture in the very same Language as we always speak of Three distinct Persons; nor yet dividing in our Thoughts that Unity which we are taught to be in God, so as to apprehend or imagine that in the Divine Nature there is or can be more than one Substance or Spirit.

*For altho' it is impossible for the limited Capacity of Man to have full and adequate Notions of the things belonging unto God, which we know only in part, 1 Cor. xiii. 9. or clear and plain ones of what we only see as through a Glass darkly, v. 12. or in a Riddle (Marg.) yet that there is not only a nominal, but a real Distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is made as plain as well may be from the frequent Expressions of the Holy Scripture, which I have just now hinted at, wherein these Three are so often spoken of in the very same manner as we always speak of Three distinct Persons; and therefore, because I cannot find more proper Words to express my Thoughts of this Distinction (not can any Words, I think, fully express it as it is in itself) I choose to do it as well as I can by saying, that *there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.* But I do not hereby mean that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are Three Persons after the same manner as Three Men or Three Angels are Three Persons; all that I intend is to acknowledge and profess that real Distinction which I believe to be between them, which comes nearer to that of Three Human or Angelical Persons (according to the aforesaid Expressions of Scripture) than any other*

Other Representation that I can make, or that I find to be made of it; and however imperfect (for want of sufficient Capacity or Information) my Apprehension of this Distinction may be, yet if I so believe it, as in Consequence thereof to *worship one G O D in Trinity, and this Trinity* (to whom by my Baptism I have dedicated myself) *in Unity*, my Faith in this Point is sufficient to my everlasting Salvation.

But whilst I am thus setting forth, as well as I am able, this Trinity of Persons, I think it necessary to profess, that all this is to be understood in such a manner (and none other) as to be perfectly and fully consistent with the Unity of God; for there neither is nor can be more than one God; and therefore I also expressly say, as I truly believe, that *the Divine Nature, or Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one* and the very same, and consequently *the Glory equal and the Majesty co-eternal*.

If any one shall demand how this can be? Or what Possibility is there, that one and the same Being should yet be Three? I can only say, that when God shall be pleased to enlarge my Faculties (as he certainly will do if I arrive to the Life of the Blessed in the World to come) when my present Knowledge, which is but in part, shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come in its room, *1 Cor. xiii. 10.* when I shall be blessed with seeing God as he is, *1 John iii. 2.* or Face to Face, and knowing him in some manner as I am also known of him, *1 Cor. xiii. 12.* then shall my Faith be turn'd into Knowledge, and what I now only believe upon the bare Testimony of God's Word, I shall then have a clear and distinct Apprehension of; but in the mean time for me to take upon me to offer any Explication of this Mystery,

stery, whereby to make it as clear in itself to the Reason and Understanding of Man, as it is, or ought to be, in its Credibility to his Faith upon the Authority of God, would be much the same as if a Man who never had Eyes, and yet believes something of Light and Colours from the many Discourses and analogical Representations which he has had of them from his honest Neighbours, should take upon him to write a Discourse of Opticks. And as the same Demand may perhaps several times be made upon occasion of what I am farther about to say touching the Profession of my Faith, so I desire that (once for all) the Answer which I have now given may be suppos'd to be return'd to it: My Design is only to declare what I believe, either upon the express Testimony of Holy Scripture, or such evident Consequences from it, as I think no considering Man can avoid; but to explain any thing that is no Object either of my Sense or Reason, but of my Faith only, and which God has not thought fit as yet to explain to me; as it is no part of my Undertaking, so would it be an Attempt altogether as fruitless, as every one must own it would be presumptuous.

However from the Doctrine of a Trinity in the Unity of God, thus stated from the Holy Scriptures, there are certain Consequences, which tho' I am not able to explain any more than I am the Doctrine itself; yet finding them so evidently to follow, and divers, if not all of them, to be plainly contained in the Holy Scriptures, I am ready to embrace and profess them, not only because I believe them to be true, but also that I would willingly give Satisfaction to all Christians, that under a general Confession of a Trinity and Unity in God, I do not secretly harbour any Explication that is really destructive

destructive of that Doctrine which outwardly and in Words I pretend to believe.

For Example, One and the very same Divine Nature, Substance, or Godhead, being common to the Three Persons, we must of Necessity say, that *such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.*

That the Father is uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate.

That the Father is incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

And that the Father is eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal.

But still because the Divine Nature is but one and the same, we must with the like Necessity add, *And yet they are not three Eternals but one Eternal: By which way of speaking we do not deny but that they are three Eternal Persons (still understanding the Word Person in the Sense I have but now given it) only we say and mean that they are not three Eternal Gods, but one only.*

As also it is in the same manner to be understood when we farther say, that there are not three Incomprehensibles, nor three Uncreated, but one Uncreated, and one Incomprehensible.

So likewise our Confession is to be interpreted, when we say the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty.

And yet they are not three Almighties, but one Almighty.

For so we expressly say, that *the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; because one and the same Godhead or Divine Nature is common to the three Persons:*

And yet that they are not three Gods, but one God; because we most firmly believe that the Divine Na-

ture neither is nor can be more than One.

And so likewise for the same Reason we say, that *the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord.*

And yet that they are not three Lords, but one Lord.

For like as we are compelled by the Christian Verity, contained in the Holy Scriptures, to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; because we there find the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to be after that manner distinctly spoken of;

So are we forbidden by the Catholick Religion, in the same Scriptures comprised, to say, there be three Gods or three Lords; because they so often expressly tell us that there is but one.

Farthermore, when also we speak of each of these Persons severally, and as they are distinguished one from the other, because the Matter is far above our Understanding, we think ourselves still in like manner obliged either to use the very Words of Scripture, or such as are exactly agreeable to the Tenour thereof, without taking upon us any farther to explain the things themselves, than what the Scripture has already done for us.

Of the Father then, as a distinct Person, we say, that he is made of none, neither created nor begotten.

Of the Son we say, that he is the Son of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten.

And of the Holy Ghost we say, that he is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

These Expressions I say we make use of, because we find them exactly agreeable to Scripture, and the Representation that there is made

of the Divine Oeconomy (if I may so speak) without pretending to explain the exact Meaning of the Words [Begotten and Proceeding] or assigning the Difference between them, as upon this Occasion they are used; but altogether content with that Analogy which God has thus been pleased to signify that there is between the (to us) incomprehensible things of himself, and those of human kind with which we are familiarly acquainted.

As then we are careful to maintain and assert the Unity of the Divine Nature or Substance, *so* do we think it our Duty also to profess our Belief of the Number and Distinction of Persons which the Scripture sufficiently teaches us to be in the Godhead; it appearing most evidently from the Word of God, that in this Unity of Nature, Substance, or Essence, *there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts*; that is to say, three Persons, and neither more nor less, according to the Explication already given of the Word [Person.]

And since the Divine Nature, or Substance, is one and the same, and common to each and every of the three Persons; it must necessarily follow with respect thereunto, that *in this Trinity none is afore or after another, none is greater or less than another.*

But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.

So that in all things, as is herein aforesaid and express'd, the Unity of God in the Trinity of Persons, and the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead is to be worshiped. And this is the fundamental Principle of the Catholick Faith, into which all Christians are by Christ himself commanded to be baptized, *Mat. xxviii. 19.*

But some perhaps will say, that they are willing to confess their Faith in the Words of Scripture, but not in any others that are of human Contrivance. I answer, that our Faith does not consist in this or that Form of Words, but in the Belief of the Things themselves that God has made known. And if any Ecclesiastical or Scholastick Words, that have been made use of to express our Faith, may perhaps to some seem doubtful or not sufficiently proper, such Words are always to be understood and interpreted in compliance with the Scripture, which is the Rule of our Faith, and not the Scripture in compliance with their supposed Meaning. Good Christians may possibly differ about Forms of Expression; but since to worship one God in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is the fundamental Principle of the Catholick Faith (as has been already said) it follows, that *he therefore that will* do all that is ordinarily necessary to *be saved* in that only sure and certain Way, which God has revealed and made known, *must thus think of the Trinity*, whatever Words he may happen to make use of for the more clear and better expressing of his Thoughts. But since those Words which the Christian Church has so long made use of to express their Belief of this Mystery, being understood according to that Analogy which the Holy Scripture often represents to be between spiritual and sensible things, are so fairly agreeable to the Words and Expressions of the Scripture itself; it would, I think, be an Argument of an unquiet and unpeaceable Temper in me, should I obstinately reject those Words for no other reason, but only because in their primary and literal Sense they do not agree unto the things they are made use of to express. If we must never speak of God but in such Terms as in the most strict and

literal Sense do agree unto him, for ought that I can find, we must for ever be silent about him, and neither demonstrate his Being, nor declare his Attributes, nor even set forth his Praises. But if all that we can possibly say of him, his Attributes, and Actions, must of Necessity be expressed not in literal but analogical Terms (as I think is sufficiently to be gathered from what I have said in the foregoing Discourse, § XXXIV, &c.) what imaginable Reason can be given, why any Man should obstinately reject such sort of Terms when we come to speak of that Trinity, which the Scripture so evidently represents to be in the Unity of the Godhead?

Furthermore, it is, in like manner, necessary to everlasting Salvation (I mean in that ordinary way and method which God has settled and established under the Gospel) *that he who thus believes the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature, as is above set forth, do also believe rightly that the second Person in this Holy Trinity (who is called the Son or the Word) did, in the Fulness of Time, take human Nature upon him, and become Man for our sake; which we commonly call the Doctrine of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

For altho' our weak and dark Reason is not able to explain or comprehend how or after what manner the Divine and Human Nature are conjoined together in one Person, any more than how three Persons can be united in the same Divine Nature; yet that the thing is really so, is so evidently to be collected from a great many Passages of Holy Scripture, which give this Account of him, that we cannot but acknowledge that the right Faith is, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.

Being the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, he is *GOD of the Substance of the Father* (with whom he is by Nature one) *begotten before the Worlds from all Eternity; and* having been miraculously conceived and born of a pure Virgin, we therefore say that he is *Man of the Substance of his Mother, born in the World.*

And the Divine and Human Nature being both compleat in him, we therefore farther express our Meaning by saying, that he is *perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable Soul and Human Flesh subsisting.*

That he is *equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood.*

Who altho' he be really and truly both God and Man, yet, finding him always spoken of in Scripture in the same manner as we usually speak of one single Person, we must of necessity say that he is not two, but one Christ.

And though we are not able fully to explain the Manner of the Unity of the Two Natures in Christ; as being altogether above our Comprehension; yet, to prevent all Misapprehensions of our Meaning herein, we say that Christ is *One, not by any Conversion of the Godhead into Flesh* (which we take to be a thing in itself impossible) *but by taking of the Manhood, which is by Nature finite, into God, who is a Being infinite.*

And this still to be understood without supposing any Mixture of the Divine and Human Substance (such as, for Example, there is between Two different Liquors when they are put together in one Vessel) for however God and Man are join'd in Christ, yet still the Divine and Human Nature in him remain distinct, tho' not
separate

separate one from the other; for which Reason we say that Christ is *One altogether, not by Confusion of the Divine and Human Substance, but by the Conjunction of God and Man in Unity of Person.*

For (to illustrate this Matter a little, as far as we are capable) *as the reasonable Soul or Spirit, and Human Flesh or Body is, and makes but one Man, in whom still the Spirit and Body, however closely join'd together, do yet truly retain their several and distinct Natures; so God, and Man, without any Alteration in either Nature or Substance, is, and constitutes but one Person in Christ.*

And this is he *who suffer'd for our Salvation, descended into Hell, and rose again the third Day from the Dead.*

He ascended into Heaven, he sitteth on the Right Hand of the Father God Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the Quick and the Dead.

At whose coming all Men shall rise again with their Bodies, and shall give Account for their own Works.

And they that have done Good (that is to say, have sincerely perform'd what God by the Gospel requires from us) shall go into Life everlasting, and they that have done Evil (that is to say, have liv'd wickedly, and not made their Peace with God by a timely Repentance) shall go into everlasting Punishment, which, for the Dreadfulness of it, is in scripture represented by the Appellation of Fire.

This Doctrine which I have now been setting forth, is, for Substance, the main and fundamental Part of the Catholick Faith; however, possible it is, that they who agree in one and the same true Belief, may yet (as I have already said) sometimes

sometimes differ about the Words or Terms wherein they make Profession of it. If indeed a Man wants Capacity to apprehend these things, or sufficient Information about them, so that this Error or Ignorance is not thro' any Fault of his own, I pass no Judgment upon him, but leave him to stand or fall to his own Master; but as for those who have sufficient Capacity, but yet will not hearken to what is propos'd to them in the Name and by the Authority of God, or reject any Doctrine that he has made known, because it cannot be directly explain'd by, or prov'd from the Principles of Reason; or if on any other Account a Man's want of Belief is thro' his own Neglect or Fault; with respect to such a Man as this, I say, that this is that Faith, *which except a Man receive when it is sufficiently propos'd to him, and believe so faithfully, as sincerely and conscientiously to perform the Duties that are grounded upon it, he cannot be eternally saved.*

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